

that, whan that blisfulnesse is requered of alle, that good also is requered and desired of alle? It ne recordeth me nat, quod I; for I have it gretly alwey fished in my memorie. Alle folk thanne, quod she, goode and eek badde, enforcen hem withoute difference of entencion to comen to good? This is a verray consequence, quod I. And certein is, quod she, that by the getinge of good ben men ymaked goode? This is certein, quod I. Thanne geten goode men that they desiren? So semeth it, quod I. But wikkede folk, quod she, yif they geten the good that they desiren, they ne mowe nat be wikkede? So is it, quod I.

THANNE, so as that oon and that other, quod she, desiren good; and the goode folk geten good, & nat the wikke folk; thanne nis it no doute that the goode folk ne ben mighty & the wikkede folk ben feble? Whoso that ever, quod I, douteth of this, he ne may nat considere the nature of thinges ne the consequence of resouns.

AND over this, quod she, yif that ther be two thinges that han oo same purpose by kinde, and that oon of hem pursueth & parformeth thilke same thing by naturel office, and that other ne may nat doon thilke naturel office, but folweth, by other manere thanne is convenable to nature, him that accomplissheth his purpos kindly, and yit hene accomplissheth nat his owne purpos: whether of this two demestow for more mighty? Yif that I conjecte, quod I, that thou wolt seye, algates yif I desire to herkne it more pleyntly of thee. Thou wilt nat thanne deneye, quod she, that the moevement of goinge nis in men by kinde? No, forsothe, quod I. Ne thou nedoutest nat, quod she, that thilke naturel office of goinge ne be the office of feet? I ne doute it nat, quod I.

THANNE, quod she, yif that a wight be mighty to moeve and goth upon his feet, and another, to whom thilke naturel office of feet lakketh, enforceth him to gon crepinge upon his handes: whiche of this two oughte to ben holden the more mighty by right?

KNIT forth the remenaunt, quod I; for no wight ne douteth that he that may gon by naturel office of feet ne be more mighty than he that ne may nat.

AT the sovereign good, quod she, that is evenliche purposed to the gode folk & to badde, the gode folk seken it by naturel office of vertues, & the shrewes enforcen hem to geten it by dyverse covetyse of erthely thinges, which that nis no naturel office to geten thilke same sovereign good. Trowestow that it be any other

wyse?

NAY, quod I; for the consequence is open and shewing of thinges that I have graunted; that nedes gode and unmyghty.

GOD rennest aright bifore me, quod she, and this is the jugement; that is to seyn, I juge of thee right as thise leches ben wont to hopen of syke folk, whan they aperceyven that nature is dressed and withstondeth to the maladye. But, for I see thee now al redy to the unthikke & continual resouns, for loke how how gretly sheweth the feblesse and infirmitie of wikkede folk, that ne mowen nat comen to that hir naturel entencion ledeth hem, and yit almost thilke naturel entencion constraineneth hem. And what were to demen thanne of shrewes, yif thilke naturel help hadde forleten hem, the which naturel help of intencion goth away bifore hem, and is so greet that unnethe it may ben overcome? Consider thanne how greet defaute of power and how greet feblesse ther is in wikkede felonous folk; as whosseyth, the gretter thing that is covetied and the desire nat accomplisshed, of the lasse might is he that coveteth it and may nat accomplissheth. And forthy Philosophie seyeth thus by sovereign good: Ne shrewes ne requeren nat lighte medes ne veyne games, whiche they ne may folwene holden; but they failen of thilke somme and of the heighte of thinges, that is to seyn, sovereign good; ne thise wrecches ne comen nat to the effect of sovereign good, the which they enforcen hem only to geten, by nightes and by dayes; in the getinge of which good the strengthe of good folk is ful wel ysene. For right so as thou mightest demen him mighty of goinge, that gooth on his feet til he mighte come to thilke place, fro the whiche place ther ne laye no wey forther to ben gon; right so most thou nedes demen him for right mighty, that geteth & ateyneth to the ende of alle thinges that ben to desire, byonde the whiche ende thernis nothing to desire. Of the which power of good folk men may conclude, that the wikked men semen to be bareine & naked of alle strengthe. For why forleten they vertues & folwen vyces? Nis it nat for that they ne knowen nat the goodes? But what thing is more feble and more caitif thanne is the blindnesse of ignorance? Or elles they knowen ful wel whiche thinges that they oughten folwe, but lecherye and covetyse overthroweth hem mistorned; and certes, so doth distemperance to feble men, that ne mowen nat wrastlen ayeins the vyces. Ne knowen

they nat thanne wel that they forleten the good wilfully, and tornen hem wilfully to vyces? And in this wyse they ne forleten nat only to ben mighty, but they forleten aloutrely in any wyse for to ben. For they that forleten the comune fyn of alle thinges that ben, they forleten also therewithal for to ben.

AND peraventure it sholde semen to som folk that this were a merveile to seyn: that shrewes, whiche that comen the more partye of men, ne ben nat ne han no beinge; but natheles, it is so, & thus han no beinge; but they that ben shrewes, I deneye nat that they ben shrewes; but I deneye, and seye simply & pleyntly, that they ne ben nat, ne han no beinge. For right as thou mightest seyn of the carayne of a man, that it were a deed man, but thou ne mightest nat simply callen it a man; so graunte I wel forsothe, that vicious folk ben wikked, but I ne may nat graunte absolutly and simply that they ben. For thilke thing that withholdeth ordre and kepeth nature, thilke thing is and hath beinge; but what thing that faileth of that, that is to seyn, that he forleteth naturel ordre, he forleteth thilke thing that is set in his nature. But thou wolt seyn, that shrewes mowen. Certes, that ne deneye I nat; but certes, hir power ne descendeth nat of strengthe, but of feblesse. For they mowen don wikkednesses; the whiche they ne mighte nat don, yif they mighten dwellen in the forme & in the doinge of good folk. And thilke power sheweth ful evidently that they ne mowen right naught. For so as I have gadered & proeved a litel herbifore, that yvel is naught; and so as shrewes mowen only but shrewednesses, this conclusioun is al cleer, that shrewes ne mowen right naught, ne han no power. And for as moche as thou understonde which is the strengthe of this power of shrewes, I have definisshed a litel herbifore, that nothing is so mighty as sovereign good. That is sooth, quod I. And thilke same sovereign good may don non yvel? Certes, no, quod I. Is ther any wight thanne, quod she, that weneth that men mowen doon alle thinges? No man, quod I, but yif he be out of his witte.

But, certes, shrewes mowen don yvel, quod she. Ye, wolde God, quod I, that they mighten don non!

THANNE, quod she, so as he that is mighty to doon only but goode thinges may don alle thinges; and they that ben mighty to don yvele thinges ne mowen nat alle thinges: thanne is it open thing and manifest, that they that mowen don yvel ben of lasse power. And yif, to prove this conclusioun, ther help-

eth me this, that I have yshewed herbifore, that alle power is to be noumbred among thinges that men oughten requere. And I have shewed that alle thinges, that oughten ben desired, ben referred to good, right as to a maner heighte of hir nature. But for to mowen don yvel and felonye ne may nat ben referred to good. Thanne nis nat yvel of the noumbir of thinges that oughte ben desired. But alle power oughte ben desired & requered. Than is it open and cleer that the powerne the mowing of shrewes nis no power; and of alle thise thinges it sheweth wel, that the goode folk ben certeinly mighty, and the shrewes douteles ben unmyghty. And it is cleer and open that thilke opinoun of Platois verray and sooth, that seith, that only wyse men may doon that they desiren; & shrewes mowen haunten that hem lyketh, but that they desiren, that is to seyn, to comen to sovereign good, they ne han no power to accomplisshen that. For shrewes don that hem list, whan, by tho thinges in which they delysten, they wenen to atene to thilke good that they desiren; but they ne geten ne atenen nat therto, for vyces ne comen nat to blisfulnesse.

Metre II.

Quos vides sedere celsos.

WHOSO THAT the cover-toures of hir veyne aprailes mighte strepen of thise proude kinges, that thou seest sitten on heigh in hir chaires glitteringe in shyninge purple, enviroined with sorwful armures, manasinge with cruel mouth, blowinge by woodnesse of herte, he shulde seen thanne that thilke lordes beren withinne hir corages ful streite cheines. For lecherye tormenteth hem in that oon syde with gredy venims; and troublable ire, that araiseth in him the flodes of troublings, tormenteth upon that other syde hir thought; or sorwe halt hem wery and ycaught; or slydinge and deceivinge hope tormenteth hem. And therefore, sen thou seest oon heed, that is to seyn, oon tyraunt, beren so manye tyrannyes, thanne ne doth thilke tyraunt nat that he desireth, sin he is cast down with so manye wikked lordes; that is to seyn, with so manye vyces, that han so wikkedly lordshipes over him.